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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [KCOR](#) [KE](#)
SUBJECT: KENYA POLL RESULTS: KIBAKI'S RATING UP, BUT NOT A
SURE BET FOR 2007

REF: A. NAIROBI 5207

[1](#)B. NAIROBI 5129

This message is Sensitive But Unclassified. Please handle accordingly.

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: A recent national opinion poll shows that more Kenyans approve of President Kibaki than earlier in the year. However, although Kibaki came out far in front of a field of six leading opposition candidates, he did not fare as well in head-to-head races, in particular against prominent Orange Democratic Movement-Kenya leader Kalonzo Musyoka. Below is a summary of the results of the USAID supported International Republican Institute poll. Due to their sensitivity, the head-to-head numbers were not publicly released. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) An International Republican Institute (IRI) poll, conducted across Kenya from November 3-6, revealed increased positive sentiments among Kenyans about the government and President Kibaki since June, but also showed that Kibaki's strong rating depends on how the opposition is configured. After an extended bad patch - November 2005's referendum defeat, February's public exposure of massive corruption scandals, and the Standard raids in March - the President received a boost. His October 20 Kenyatta day speech was very well-received, and the poll, conducted less than two weeks later, shows the President's image had improved by November. In June, 46.5% of respondents felt the country was moving in the right direction; this number increased to 59.5% in November. Other performance indicators showed a similar upswing: government job approval rating was 55.7% in June and 67.3% in November and the percentage choosing "done well" for the government election promises rating increased from 44.7% to 57.8% in November.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Although it is widely held that President Kibaki stands a good chance of winning the presidency again, the poll results show a more nuanced calculus among voters. When asked to choose between Kibaki and a slate of six leading opposition candidates, 41.6% of respondents chose Kibaki as their preferred presidential candidate (compared to 30.7% in June). The next nearest candidate (in both June and November) was Kalonzo Musyoka with 20.2% (down from 24.4% in June). However, when Kenyans were asked if the election were

held today (in November) and the choice was between Kibaki and another candidate, the President still fares well against all candidates but one: opposition front-runner and Orange Democratic Movement-Kenya (ODM-K) leader Kalonzo Musyoka. In the November survey, 49.7% percent of Kenyans selected Musyoka compared to 48.2% for Kibaki (Note: the head-to-head results were not publicly released per IRI policy. END NOTE.)

14. (SBU) Parliament's approval rating also grew from 39.6% in June to 49.3% in November. When asked about their own MPs' performance, however, respondents did not report progress. The number approving was virtually the same over the period: 43.9% and 44.2%. Also unchanged was Kenyans' plans not to send their MPs to Nairobi again: less than 40% think their MP deserves to be re-elected. Although respondents had strong views on corruption (only half thought the government was committed to fighting it, unchanged from June) fewer than 10 percent cited it as the most important issue in Kenya (also unchanged from June). Creating employment and poverty reduction were chosen as the top two issues.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: The head-to-head results reveal the difference in voters' minds between Kibaki facing a united opposition behind a single contender, and a field of candidates -- if the elections were held today. There is nearly a year to go, however, before the general election, and a few missteps by either side can make a great deal of difference. Since the poll was conducted, the government has been accused of monkeying with Kenya's political parties (reftels) - an unpalatable throw back to the old days for many Kenyans which may again hurt Kibaki's image. IRI, which has a credible polling track record in Kenya, is scheduled to conduct its next survey in February 2007. END COMMENT.
RANNEBERGER